



Connecticut  
Early Childhood  
Alliance

**Testimony before the Select Committee on Children Committee  
Re: S.B. 887 – An Act Concerning the Care4Kids Program  
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Executive Director  
Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance  
Thursday, February 21, 2013**

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Good afternoon, Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and members of the Committee on Children. I am Maggie Adair, Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance (Alliance). The Alliance is a statewide advocacy and membership organization committed to improving outcomes for all children, birth to age eight, in the areas of early learning, health, safety, and economic security.

The Alliance supports *S.B. 887 – An Act Concerning the Care4Kids Program*. This bill would extend up to 12 weeks the Care4Kids payment eligibility period for women who are temporarily absent from work for maternity leave. The bill stipulates that payment eligibility is contingent upon three conditions: the mother intends to return to work, verification is made that eligibility is needed to prevent the loss of a preschool slot, and the child continues to attend the program during the mother's maternity leave.

Providing continued Care4Kids coverage for women on maternity leave helps to ensure continuity of care and stability for children, and allows parents to return to work and ensure family economic security. According to the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, studies document that schedules and routines influence a child's emotional, cognitive, and social development. Sustained positive relationships with caregivers promotes nurturing attachments, healthy brain development, and better health, emotional and academic outcomes in the early years and later in life.

This bill language was introduced in the 2012 legislative session, but the bill did not pass. We commend the Department of Social Services for voluntarily adopting a new policy effective July 1, 2012, which provides up to 6 weeks of Care4Kids payment eligibility for mothers on maternity leave. The policy is currently in effect. The Alliance supports a statutory change and expanding it to 12 weeks, as is proposed in S.B. 877.

Given the state budget constraints and recent cuts to the Care4Kids program, we would also support an amendment to align this bill with the existing six-week leave policy that DSS enacted. The six-week window aligns with the age that an infant is allowed to be placed in a licensed early childhood setting in Connecticut.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify.